

Honorable Committee Members, other fellow elected officials, Parents and Community, I am compelled to speak today as a member of the Detroit Public School Board, chair of the Academic Achievement Committee and an educator. It is important for everyone to know about the state of education in Detroit, especially under the auspices of the financial manager.

Our Board from the very beginning took the reigns of a broken system as the result of a complete State take over with a singular authority figure. When we took office in 2006, we embraced the Governor's Transition Plan and immediately started to make changes necessary to improve academic achievement. These changes included providing ACT prep for all eleventh graders, all day pre- school, Council of Great Cities Schools audit of all aspects of DPS. We adopted this report's recommendations and began to immediately put them in effect. This included the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). See Attached details.

For about the past year our Board, staff and students have been imprisoned, jailed like Martin Luther King was on April 16, 1963 in Birmingham, albeit not a physical prison. Staff that are ethical and honest have been fired and/or threatened to be fired. High schools are over crowded with a minimum of forty students in classes. In some subjects, outdated textbooks are used whereas in other curriculum areas forty million dollars are unnecessarily spent to placate certain consultants hired. We can have similar services free from Wayne RESA. Our academic Plan has been held "Hostage" because we cannot get funding and/or staff support for it. Yet, as of this week Mr. Bobb's staff do not even have the Academic Plan they promised the Governor. Several Consultants have been hired, and they in turn have hired their own set of consultants while over

seventy percent of our academic staff have been laid off. All of DPS staff have taken pay cuts out of fear of being fired while out of state consultants are constantly being hired with salaries at a hundred thousand dollars or more, expense accounts such as four hundred dollars a week for food, first class plane flights back and forth, free-living expenses while at the same time we have a dramatic increase in our poverty rates for students since the economic crisis. Our rates are currently hovering between 80% and 90%. Counselors are forced to try to help a minimum of one thousand students as their caseload. We are in violation of North Central guidelines. For the first time, serious gang issues are rampant throughout our schools because the Board's concerns have been ignored. Our Board has been forced to learn about any financial and academic information through the news outlets. There is no formal relationship with the financial manager.

While in jail, Dr. King points out that a law is "unjust if it is inflicted on a minority (Detroiters) that as a result, had no part in devising or enacting the law. Detroiters have been held hostage, illegally, because our Governor, the leader of this state has refused to force the financial manager to follow the letter and spirit of the Fiscal Responsibility Act. Consequently, we are denied our legal right to pursue academic excellence for our students. This unjust and unequal application of the law has permitted a parade of consultants have further ravaged our budget, and, by the way, the financial manager says that he cannot balance our budget, but he is still here. In fact, he is making a greater deficit much like the previous take over by the State. How much he has spent, on what it is being spent and the rationale for spending has not been revealed to our Board, the public or you, our elected State officials. So, I say again that we, DPS is in a

jail—a political prison because there are those seen and unseen who stand to benefit from this total unbridled power possessed by the financial manager. And now his appetite for power is not satisfied, greed under the guise of helping our students achieve academically, the financial manager and those who stands to benefit financially wants another total take over. We have been here before. Under the original State take over, our academic gains were wiped out. Our financial surplus became a major deficit for which we are still held responsible.

Once the Board took its seats, our MEAP scores began to improve. However, the State informed us that we would not have any additional money to help with the problems we initially found . We were essentially told, “Make due and Mend” like the old World War II slogan states. In essence, our Board has not been given equal opportunity to spend money as the State has provided the Financial Manager as it also did in the first take over.

I am asking you to not support a change in the Fiscal Responsibility Act to allow any financial manager to have complete control over any school district. You have been placed in a very dubious political situation, but it is one that will test the “soul” of this body as you have to make a simple choice, but one that has the possibility of negative personal consequences if you decide to “do the right thing” as Spike Lee says. What you are faced with is, as Thomas Paine says, “ a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it superficial appearances of being right. Political might/muscle to just “show” that you are doing something is merely just that a “show” without substance’. Our sole goal as a Board is to substantially improve academic achievement for all of our children. Support our legal right to continue to do our work.

Our Board urges you to support the State law that has been upheld by Judge Wendy Baxter and not change it for the benefit of a minority. I urge you to remember the words of Bodie Thoene in the Warsaw Requiem, “What is right is often forgotten by what is convenient.” Therefore, while it may be politically convenient to “buckle under”, please do not. Thomas Coleman DuPont empathically recognizes:

The right type of leader is democratic. He (she) must not consider himself a superior sort of personage. He (she) must actually feel democratic; it is not enough that he (she ) try to pose as democratic—he (she) must be democratic; otherwise the veneer, the sheen, would wear off, for you can’t fool a body of intelligent American workingmen (women) for very long. He (she) must ring true.

You ARE the right type of leader, so do not let your democratic sheen and veneer wear off our legal educational rights and, thus, make a mockery of all of our ancestors’ efforts, Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement’s efforts to provide public education entrusted to local elected Boards a mockery. A change in the Fiscal Responsibility Act to give total and complete control over a certain school district or any school district goes against the equal protection clause of the Constitution!

Thank you for this opportunity to hear our Board’s desire.



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## THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

National Assessment of Educational Progress (home)

## The Nation's Report Card: Trial Urban District Assessment Mathematics 2009

### Trial Urban District Assessment Snapshot Reports

The following Snapshot reports provide a one-page printable PDF (Adobe Acrobat Reader required) of the district results. These results include overall scale scores, scale scores for different percentiles, percentages at each achievement level, and performance by demographic groups.

Grade 4	Grade 8
<a href="#">Atlanta Public Schools 130k</a> <a href="#">Austin Independent School District 127k</a> <a href="#">Baltimore City Public Schools 124k</a> <a href="#">Boston Public Schools 129k</a> <a href="#">Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools 126k</a> <a href="#">Chicago Public Schools 129k</a> <a href="#">Cleveland Metropolitan School District 128k</a> <a href="#">Detroit Public Schools 128k</a> <a href="#">District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) 129k</a> <a href="#">Fresno Unified School District 125k</a> <a href="#">Houston Independent School District 129k</a> <a href="#">Jefferson County Public Schools (KY) 128k</a> <a href="#">Los Angeles Unified School District 129k</a> <a href="#">Miami-Dade County Public Schools 129k</a> <a href="#">Milwaukee Public Schools 129k</a> <a href="#">New York City Department of Education 131k</a> <a href="#">School District of Philadelphia 128k</a> <a href="#">San Diego Unified School District 126k</a>	<a href="#">Atlanta Public Schools 128k</a> <a href="#">Austin Independent School District 127k</a> <a href="#">Baltimore City Public Schools 128k</a> <a href="#">Boston Public Schools 129k</a> <a href="#">Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools 127k</a> <a href="#">Chicago Public Schools 126k</a> <a href="#">Cleveland Metropolitan School District 128k</a> <a href="#">Detroit Public Schools 128k</a> <a href="#">District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) 130k</a> <a href="#">Fresno Unified School District 129k</a> <a href="#">Houston Independent School District 127k</a> <a href="#">Jefferson County Public Schools (KY) 127k</a> <a href="#">Los Angeles Unified School District 131k</a> <a href="#">Miami-Dade County Public Schools 128k</a> <a href="#">Milwaukee Public Schools 130k</a> <a href="#">New York City Department of Education 131k</a> <a href="#">School District of Philadelphia 128k</a> <a href="#">San Diego Unified School District 129k</a>

Browse the 2009 mathematics results for the nation, states, and districts.

*Last updated 24 November 2009 (RF)*

## **Reforming and Improving the Detroit Public Schools**

management, and operational changes to improve achievement, effectiveness, and efficiency. These proposals are summarized below—

### **Instruction**

- Encourage the school board to participate in various professional development opportunities and build a greater consensus for the direction of the school district's reform and improvement.
- Encourage the school board to receive regular reports on the district's efforts to improve the instructional program and on trends in student achievement.
- Initiate a citywide army of volunteers, tutors, and mentors to work with and support district students.
- Encourage the superintendent to convene a regular series of community forums and outreach efforts that would allow her to express her vision and direction for reforms and to hear community concerns.
- Encourage the superintendent to establish a series of "no excuses" cross-functional administrative teams to work on major district problems.
- Develop or update the district's communications and marketing plan for engaging the public and communicating with parents.
- Begin working with the teachers' union in preparation of contract negotiations to ease the effects of bumping, particularly in the lowest performing schools.
- Conduct a systemwide inventory of programs, resources, and equipment at district schools to ensure that resources are being distributed equitably.
- Develop explicit criteria for closing any additional schools.
- Develop explicit strategies in schools and grades that are losing students to develop transition activities to retain students.
- Review all district goals for raising student achievement to ensure that they are specific, measurable, up to date, and beyond Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and safe harbor targets. (The latter refers to the minimum gains needed under *No Child Left Behind* to avoid sanctions).
- Review all school improvement plans and the district's improvement plan to ensure that the district's goals are reflected in each school's goals and plans.
- Explicitly tie the evaluation of senior staff to districtwide achievement goals and priorities.
- Reorganize the instructional unit.

## **Reforming and Improving the Detroit Public Schools**

- Revamp the district's pacing guides to reflect gap analysis and to include time for review, reteaching, and enrichment.
- Develop a parent guide that explains the expected course of study each year.
- Establish a clear policy for the ordering of textbooks and accountability for ensuring that all schools are appropriately supplied.
- Identify key strategies across content areas to engage students in the active construction of meaning and build these strategies into the literacy curriculum to enhance comprehension skills.
- Finish developing a districtwide professional development plan that includes components for teachers, principals, central-office staff, and substitute teachers.
- Negotiate additional districtwide professional development days or a requirement for teacher attendance at districtwide professional development when it is linked to the curriculum.
- Establish a regular process for evaluating the effectiveness of the district's professional development on student achievement.
- Develop a new-teacher induction and training program that would be held before the beginning of the first school year.
- Incorporate customer service and parent and community relations into the district's professional development.
- Ensure that the district's disparate walk-through documents are clearly defined.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of coaching and other supports.
- Create regular protocols for reviewing and approving school improvement plans.
- Implement a short, beginning-of-year diagnostic assessment for grades K-3 and 4-8 in literacy and math.
- Reinstitute a benchmark assessment system that would measure student status on the curriculum over the course of the school year.
- Eliminate use of the TerraNova achievement test when the district begins participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) in 2009.
- Lobby the state to change its fall testing system to the spring.
- Create a longitudinal data reporting system that would alert principals and appropriate district staff to students with excess suspensions and absences and that would show where academically students or schools are falling behind.
- Develop a plan for the steps and procedures to reconstitute schools.

## **Reforming and Improving the Detroit Public Schools**

- Develop a mandatory summer program for the lowest performing students.
- Consider reconstituting the district's previous CEO-type unit to guide and monitor interventions in the district's lowest performing schools.
- Pilot test a full-day kindergarten program in high-needs areas of the city.
- Develop a districtwide gifted and talented program that is broadly accessible.
- Establish a districtwide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) program and implement it in both elementary and secondary schools.
- Tie career and technology education (CTE) programs to local labor market needs and projections.
- Back map secondary school curriculum in core content area down to at least the sixth grade to ensure that students have participated in coursework that is rigorous enough to gain them entry into college.

### **Finance**

- Develop and implement a districtwide business/finance plan that includes goals, objectives, and measurable performance indicators, and aligns with district priorities.
- Address the district's current year deficit and its habitual overstaffing practices.
- Redistribute the current responsibilities of the chief financial officer (CFO) and reorganize the finance department.
- Establish effective and transparent interim financial reporting and analysis that would disaggregate information into presentations by fund, program, and object.
- Adopt a fiscal plan to eliminate the use of short- and long-term financing to support current operating expenses.
- Establish an internal audit department, with experienced professional staff, that reports to the school board.
- Establish a district reserve and budgeting policy for self-insured losses.
- Take actions to ensure the timely payment of vendors on a systematic schedule without unneeded management intervention or oversight.
- Acquire an automated time and attendance system to augment the payroll process.
- Re-establish controls over the district equipment inventory.



## **Reforming and Improving the Detroit Public Schools**

### **Procurement**

- Conduct an outside, third-party forensic audit of current contracting and procurement processes and practices, and analyze cost-savings opportunities
- Develop a district code of ethics and a rule about lobbyists for the school board and administration
- Identify, select, task, and empower a competent professional to redesign, reengineer and restructure the contracting and procurement department.
- Task a cross-functional interim management team to sustain ongoing basic contracting and procurement (maintenance) functions

### **Information Technology**

- Hire a cabinet-level Chief Information Officer who would report directly to the superintendent, and reorganize the department.<sup>2</sup>
- Immediately develop and implement a plan to mitigate the imminent risk of business disruptions.
- Create a customer-driven multiyear business/technology plan that is tied to the districtwide strategic plan.
- Optimize underutilized functionalities within the existing business applications and add appropriate enhancements to improve performance.
- Consider replacing the current student information system with a Web-based, multifunctional system, and create a data warehouse to consolidate information.
- Develop school board policies and procurement standards to ensure that technology purchases are compatible and consistent.
- Develop, test, and utilize best business practices for data back-up and disaster recovery protocols.
- Establish procedures to ensure compliance with internal control standards.
- Issue a competitive request for proposal (RFP) to select a new transportation and routing system with functionalities that better meet the needs of the district.

### **Facilities**

- Develop a comprehensive Facilities Master Plan.

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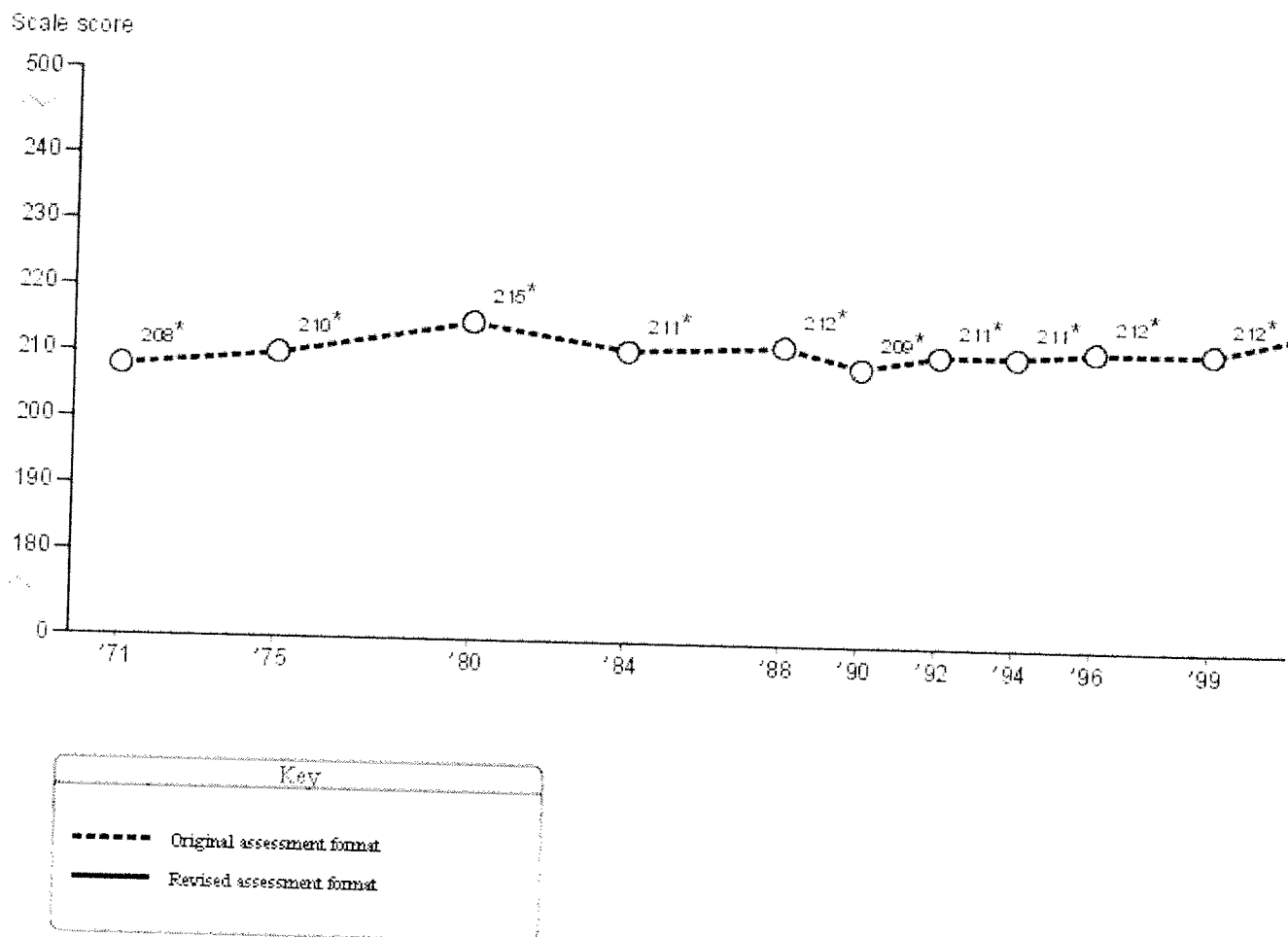
<sup>2</sup> The district hired a new chief information officer after the team's review.

# The Nation's Report Card

## Overall average reading scores higher in 2008 than in 2004 for students at all three age groups

Age 9 ■ Age 13 ■ Age 17 ■

Trend in NAEP reading average scores for 9-year-old students



### Finding

- At age 9, the average reading score in 2008 was 4 points higher than in 2004 and 12 points higher than in 1971.

\* Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from 2008.

NOTE: View [complete data](#) with standard errors.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment (NAEP), various years, 1971–2008 Long-Term Trend Reading Assessments.

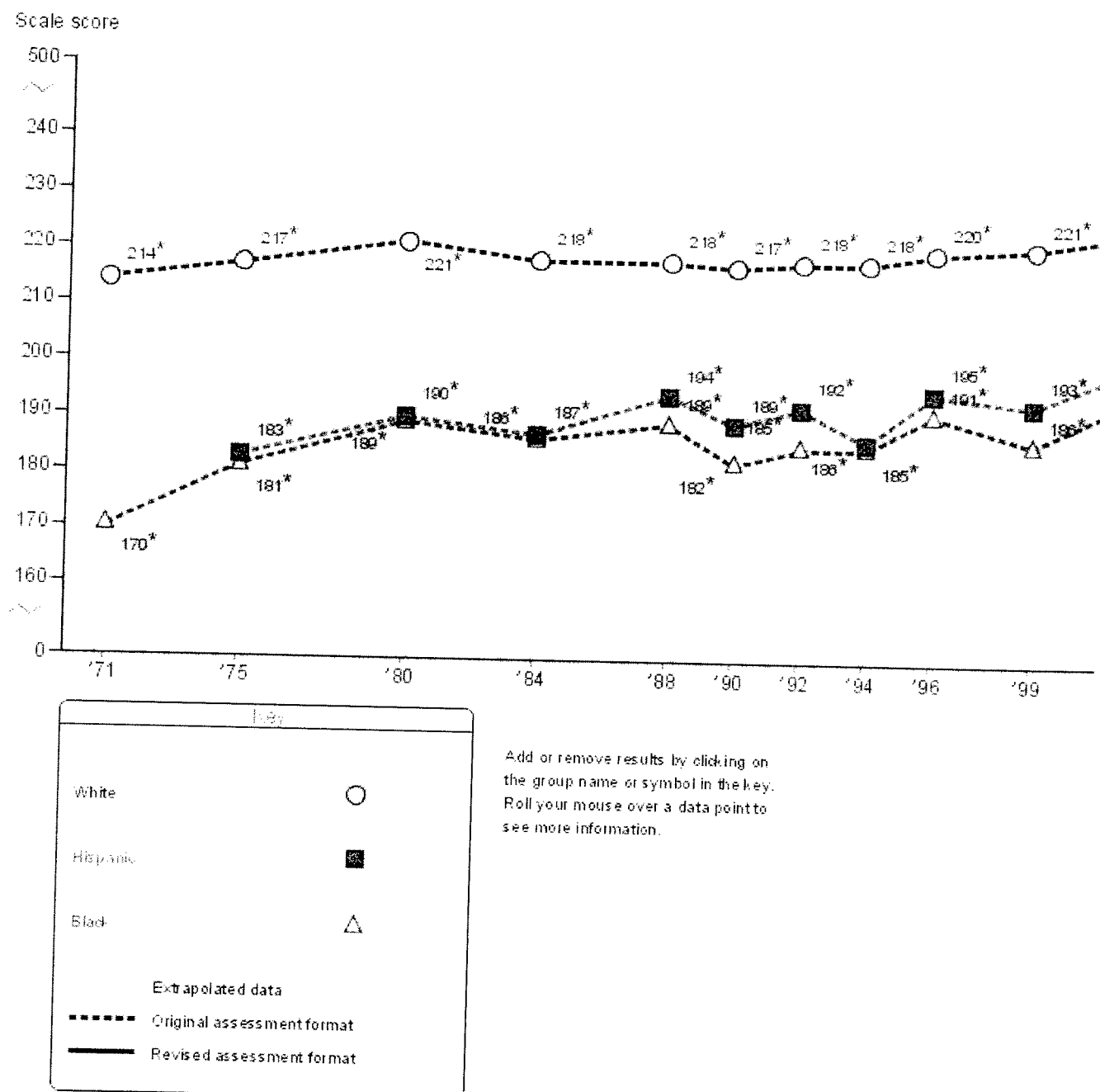
To read more details on comparisons across years, see [About the Long-Term Trend Assessment](#).

# The Nation's Report Card

## Average reading scores for White, Black, and Hispanic 9-year-olds higher in 2008 than in all previous assessments

Age 9 ■ Age 13 ■ Age 17 ■

Trend in NAEP reading average scores for 9-year-old students, by race/ethnicity

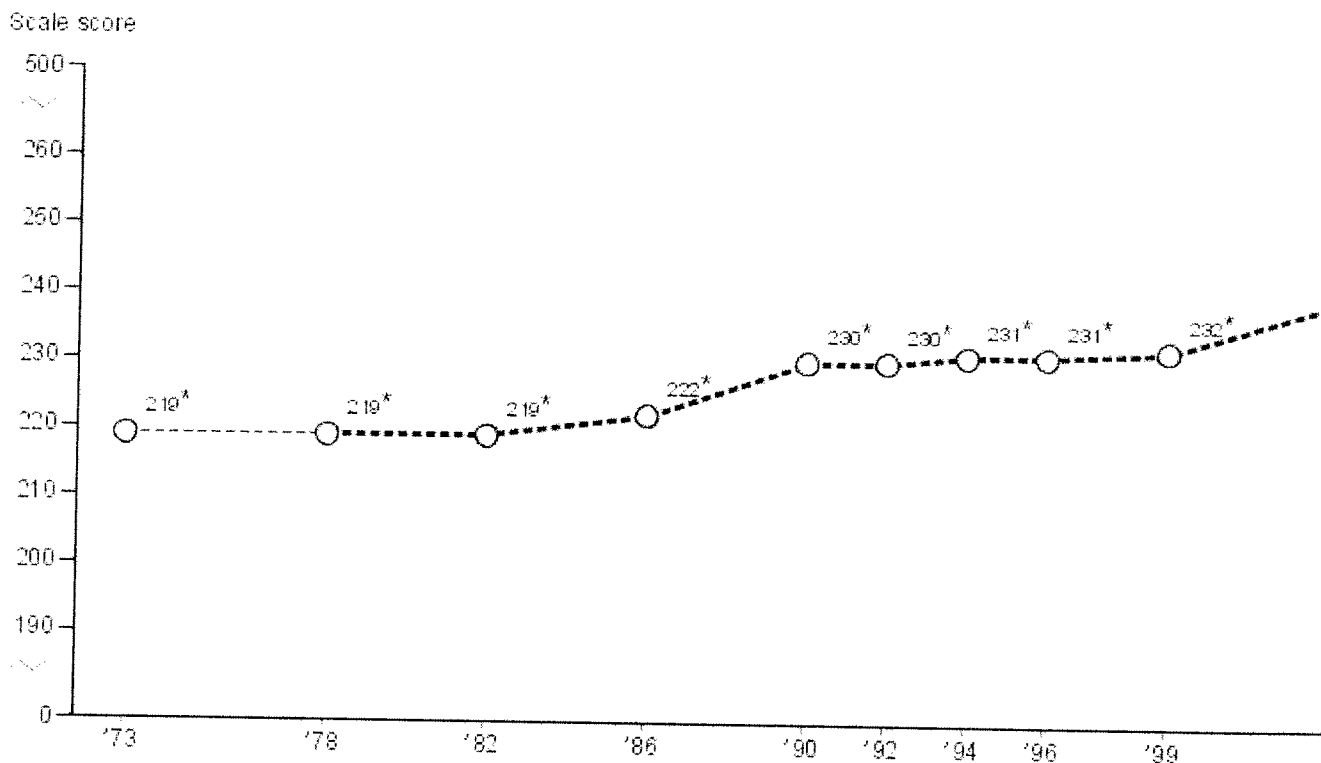




## Mathematics scores for 9- and 13-year-olds higher than in all previous assessment years

■ Age 9 ■ Age 13 ■ Age 17

Trend in NAEP mathematics average scores for 9-year-old students



### Finding

- At age 9, the average score in mathematics in 2008 was 4 points higher than in 2004 and 24 points higher than

\* Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from 2008.

NOTE: The lighter dashed lines for 1973 represent extrapolated data. View [complete data](#) with standard errors.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assess

Progress (NAEP), various years, 1973–2008 Long-Term Trend Mathematics Assessments.

To read more details on comparisons across years, see [About the Long-Term Trend Assessment](#).

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National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Center for Education Statistics

National Assessment Governing Board

Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education